

## Western Prairie Fringed Orchid *Platanthera praeclara*

**Habitat:** Mesic to wet tallgrass prairies and sedge meadows. Often found in prairies dominated by big bluestem and northern dropseed.

**Blooms:** June and July, occasionally August. Flowers are white.

**Seeds:** Released in early fall

### Threats:

- Disappearance of natural habitat
  - Conversion of prairie to cultivated ground, roads and urban development.
  - Tree and shrub invasion - shade is detrimental to the long-term survival of this species.
- Invasion of non-native plants.
- Yearly haying can prevent seed maturity and weakens adult plants.
- Overgrazing
- Fragmentation of habitat limits the population size of the species of moth that pollinates the orchid.
- Herbicide drift

### Habitat Improvement Guidelines:

- Early spring burns (by April 15 in southern Iowa and by April 20<sup>th</sup> in northern Iowa).
- Fall burns (October or later)
- Woody invasion removal (avoid disturbance of individual plants)
- Limit haying
  - Hay the portion of the site where the orchids do not occur.
  - Hay a portion of the site rather than the entire site.
  - Hay after mid-September to allow seed to mature and disperse.
  - Mark the orchids and hay around them.
- Limit grazing
- Mechanical harvest of prairie seed should be after September 15.
- Hand harvest should be used whenever possible.
- Establish new tracts of grassland surrounding existing populations to buffer against herbicide drift.

